

**PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES FOR
TRANSLATING OF RELIGIOUS CULTURAL
TERMS FROM PERSIAN INTO ENGLISH**

MEHRI EBRAHIMI

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2019

**PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES FOR
TRANSLATING OF RELIGIOUS CULTURAL
TERMS FROM PERSIAN INTO ENGLISH**

by

MEHRI EBRAHIMI

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

June 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude first and foremost to God who enabled me to accomplish my study in the process of this research successfully. I would also like to thank all whose thoughts, patience, and unstinting support incited me to complete my thesis.

First I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi whose insightful comments widened my perspective and her unfailing support assured me of my abilities. It was a great opportunity to work under her intellectual supervision. I am also grateful to her spiritual support while I was completing my Ph.D.

I would like to express my deep sentiment to my family members especially to my dear parents who patiently stood by my side and many thanks go to my sisters and brothers for their heartening helpfulness.

I wish also to appreciate all staff of the School of Languages, Literacies, and Translation (SOLLAT) for their assistance in providing research facilities at the school.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my friends, Dr. Seffettullah Kuldass, Dr. Shahram Jahani, Dr. Shiva Ramezanpour, Dr. Negah Allahyar, Dr. Masoud Amirinejad, whose encouragement and support made my Ph.D. journey truly memorable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii
List of Symbols	xv
List of Appendices	xvi
Abstrak	xvii
Abstract	xix

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Background of the Study	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem	4
1.4 Objectives of the Study	7
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.6 Significance of the Study	8
1.7 Scope and limitations of the Study	10
1.8 Definition of Key Concepts	11
1.9 Organization of the Study	12

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1	Overview	15
2.2	Persian Literature	15
2.2.1	Religious Trend in the Persian Literature	17
2.2.2	Religious Trend in the Persian Literature after Islamic Revolution	21
2.2.3	Modern Persian Literature in the Socio-Cultural Context of Translation in the US	23
2.2.4	<i>Lost in the Crowd, Hajj, and Shi'ite Islam</i> in the US Context	25
2.3	Culture	29
2.3.1	Concept of Culture in Persian and in English	30
2.3.2	Components of Culture	32
2.3.2(a)	A Model of Culture	33
2.3.2(a)(i)	Technical Culture	34
2.3.2(a)(ii)	Formal Culture	35
2.3.2(a)(iii)	Informal Culture	36
2.4	Cultural and Translation	37
2.4.1	Language and Culture	38
2.4.2	Language, Culture, and Translation	40
2.5	Culturemes	43
2.6	Untranslatability	47
2.6.1	Untranslatability of Religious Terms in the Persian Context	51
2.7	Target Reader	55
2.8	Theoretical Framework of the Study	60

2.8.1	Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS)	61
2.8.2	Translation Norm Theory	64
2.8.3	AlGhamdi's (2016) Classification of Religious Terms	69
2.8.4	Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) Translation Model	74
2.8.5	Mansor (2011) Modified Model	77
2.8.6	Venuti's (2008) Notions of Domestication and Foreignization ...	79
2.9	Summary	83

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1	Overview	84
3.2	Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure	84
3.2.1	Source of Data	85
3.2.2	Criteria for the Selection of the Corpus	86
3.2.3	Recognition and Classification of Data	87
3.3	Data Collection Method	88
3.3.1	Questionnaire	88
3.3.2	Validity and Reliability	89
3.3.3	Ethics and Verifications	90
3.4	Data Collection Procedure	90
3.4.1	Pilot Study	90
3.5	Sample and Sampling Technique	92
3.5.1	The Sample Size	92

3.5.2	Criteria for the Selection of Participants	93
3.5.3	Process of Recruitment	94
3.6	Quantitative Data Analysis Procedure.....	95
3.7	Stages of Data Collection and Analysis	98
3.8	Summary	98

CHAPTER 4 – CORPUS ANALYSIS

4.1	Overview	99
4.2	Discussion of the Analysis	99
4.3	Identification and Classification of IRCTs	103
4.3.1	Specialized Religious Activities	104
4.3.2	Religious Personages	108
4.3.2(a)	Generic Nouns of Religious Personages	108
4.3.2(b)	Proper Names of Religious Personages	110
4.3.3	Religious Groups	112
4.3.4	Miscellaneous Religious Terms	118
4.3.5	Religious Sites	119
4.3.6	Religious Constructions	120
4.3.7	Religious clothes	123
4.3.8	Supernatural Beings	125
4.3.9	Religious Events	129
4.3.10	Religious Artifacts	131

4.3.11	Eschatology Terms	134
4.4	Recognition and Classification of Translation Procedures of IRCTs	138
4.4.1	Borrowing	139
4.4.2	Calque	143
4.4.3	Literal Translation	147
4.4.3(a)	Combination of Literal Translation and Borrowing	147
4.4.4	Equivalence	153
4.4.4(a)	Combination of Borrowing and Equivalence	155
4.4.5	Transposition	159
4.4.6	Modulation	163
4.4.7	Generalization	167
4.4.8	Lexical Specification	171
4.4.9	Explication	174
4.4.9(a)	Addition and specification	174
4.4.9(b)	Explicative Glosses	177
4.4.9(c)	Combination of Explication and Borrowing	178
4.4.10	Deletion	180
4.4.10(a)	Partial Deletion	180
4.4.10(b)	Complete Deletion	183
4.5	Summary	186

CHAPTER 5 - ANALYSIS OF TARGET READERS' PREFERENCE

5.1	Overview	188
5.2	Analysis of Target Readers' Preference for Translated IRCTs	189
5.2.1	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Clothe: <i>Ihram</i>	191
5.2.2	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Artifact: <i>Tasbih</i>	193
5.2.3	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Site: <i>Haram</i>	196
5.2.4	Respondents' Preference for the Supernatural Being: <i>Khannas</i>	199
5.2.5	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Activity: <i>Jihad</i>	202
5.2.6	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Activity: <i>Azan</i>	204
5.2.7	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Groups: <i>Imams</i>	205
5.2.8	Respondents' Preference for the Religious Groups: <i>Hajjis</i>	207
5.2.9	Respondents' Preference for the Eschatology Term: <i>Tawheed</i>	209
5.2.10	Respondents' Preference for Miscellaneous Religious Term: <i>Shirk</i>	211
5.3	Summary	213

CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1	Overview	214
6.2	Summary of the Research Method	215
6.3	Research Questions	216
6.4	Summary of the Main Findings	227
6.5	Contributions of the study	229
6.6	Recommendations for further researches	231

6.7 Conclusion	231
REFERENCES	233
APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	List of Books Used as the Corpus of the Study	86
Table 5.1	IRCTs in the Questionnaire	188
Table 5.2	Descriptive Statistics for Translation Procedures	190
Table 5.3	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with RC: <i>Ihram</i>	191
Table 5.4	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with RC: <i>Ihram</i>	192
Table 5.5	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with RA: <i>Tasbih</i>	193
Table 5.6	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with RA: <i>Tasbih</i>	194
Table 5.7	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with RS: <i>Haram</i>	196
Table 5.8	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with RS: <i>Haram</i>	197
Table 5.9	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with SB: <i>Khannas</i>	199
Table 5.10	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with SB: <i>Khannas</i>	200
Table 5.11	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with SRA1: <i>Jihad</i>	202
Table 5.12	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with SRA1: <i>Jihad</i>	203
Table 5.13	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with SRA2: <i>Azan</i>	204
Table 5.14	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with SRA2: <i>Azan</i>	204
Table 5.15	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with RG1: <i>Imams</i>	205
Table 5.16	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with RG1: <i>Imams</i>	206
Table 5.17	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with RG2: <i>Hajjis</i>	207
Table 5.18	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with RG2: <i>Hajjis</i>	207

Table 5.19	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with ET: <i>Tawheed</i>	209
Table 5.20	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with ET: <i>Tawheed</i>	209
Table 5.21	Mean Rank of TT Respondents Familiarity with MRT: <i>Shirk</i>	211
Table 5.22	Evaluating Significance of Respondents Familiarity with MRT: <i>Shirk</i>	211
Table 6.1	Frequency and Percentage of Translation procedures for Transferring Persian IRCTs into English	223
Table 6.2	The Most Preferred Procedures in the Translation of IRCTs	226

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 The Iceberg representation of culture (Katan 1999, p. 30)	34
Figure 2.2 Holmes' (2000b) Basic Map of Translation Studies	62
Figure 3.1 Stages of Achieving Research Objectives	98
Figure 6.1 A New Framework for Collecting IRCTs in the Persian Corpus	217
Figure 6.2 Frequency of types of IRCTs identified in the Persian corpus	218
Figure 6.3 Frequency of Translation Procedures in Rendering Persian IRCTs into English	221
Figure 6.4 Distribution of Categories of Translation Strategies used in Rendering Persian IRCTs into English	225

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
IRCT	Islamic Religious Cultural Terms
RCT	Religious Cultural Terms
RC	Religious Clothes
RA	Religious Artifacts
RS	Religious Sites
RCO	Religious Constructions
SB	Supernatural Beings
SRA	Specialized Religious Activities
RG	Religious Groups
RE	Religious Events
GMRP	Generic Nouns of Religious Personages
ET	Eschatology Terms
MRT	Miscellaneous Religious Terms
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text

TL Target Language
TS Translation Studies
TT Target Text

LIST OF SYMBOLS

Persian	English
ب	B
پ	P
ت / ط	T
ث / س / ص	S
ج	J
چ	Ĉ
ح / ه	H
خ	X
د	D
ذ / ز / ض / ظ	Z
ر	R
ش	Ŝ
ع / ء	‘
غ / ق	Gh
ف	F
ک	K
گ	G
ل	L
م	M
ن	N
و	W
ی	Y

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Sample of Data Cells
APPENDIX B	Islamic Religious Terms in Translation Questionnaire
APPENDIX C	Statute of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution
APPENDIX D	Native English Participants Answering the Questionnaire
APPENDIX E	List of Islamic Religious Cultural Terms

PROSEDUR DAN STRATEGI PENTERJEMAHAN ISTILAH-ISTILAH BUDAYA AGAMA DARIPADA BAHASA PARSI KE BAHASA INGGERIS

ABSTRAK

Kesusasteraan Parsi memainkan peranan penting dalam memperkenalkan budaya dan seni Timur Tengah ke dunia Barat. Kajian yang dijalankan terhadap penterjemahan kesusasteraan Parsi kebanyakannya bertumpu pada puisi klasik Parsi manakala kesusasteraan Parsi moden, terutama kesusasteraan bukan fiksyen diabaikan. Penterjemahan sastera Parsi bukan fiksyen moden dengan kandungan Islam telah berkembang secara mendadak dalam tempoh selepas revolusi. Kajian ini berdasarkan tiga buah buku bidang kesusasteraan Parsi moden bukan fiksyen yang bertajuk “*Lost in the Crowd*”, “*Hajj*”, dan “*Shi'ite Islam*”. Teks-teks yang dipilih mengandungi pelbagai istilah Islam yang lazim ditemui dalam konteks keagamaan Timur Tengah Parsi yang mendukung makna yang khusus budaya. Kajian ini mempunyai dua fasa. Pada fasa pertama, kajian ini menerapkan pendekatan kajian terjemahan deskriptif (DTS) yang diperkenalkan oleh Toury (2012). Teks-teks tersebut diletakkan dalam konteks sosio-budaya terjemahan di Amerika Syarikat untuk mengkaji kedudukan terjemahan di Amerika Syarikat, khususnya terjemahan kesusasteraan Parsi. Kemudian, kajian ini cuba mengenal pasti pelbagai jenis istilah Islam dan seterusnya mengenal pasti prosedur terjemahan dan strategi keseluruhan yang digunakan untuk menterjemahkan istilah-istilah tersebut. Hal ini bertujuan mendedahkan norma-norma yang mengawal proses penterjemahan dalam menterjemahkan istilah-istilah budaya agama Islam daripada bahasa Parsi ke bahasa Inggeris. Taksonomi untuk pengenalanpastian jenis-jenis istilah

Islam Oleh AlGhamdi (2016) serta model Vinay dan Darbelnet (1995) dan Mansor (2011) digunakan untuk menunjukkan prosedur-prosedur terjemahan. Tambahan lagi, dua strategi terjemahan oleh Venuti (2000) dipilih untuk mendedahkan strategi terjemahan keseluruhan dalam kajian ini. Hasil menunjukkan 1160 kes istilah budaya agama Islam dalam 13 kategori dan penggunaan 17 prosedur yang berbeza dalam proses penterjemahan. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa terjemahan dilakukan berdasarkan norma etnosentrik yang dominan dalam konteks sasaran, iaitu hasil kajian pada fasa pertama mendedahkan bahawa norma-norma untuk menterjemahkan istilah-istilah budaya agama Islam Parsi ke dalam bahasa Inggeris cenderung ke arah terjemahan berunsur tempatan. Pada fasa kedua kajian, pilihan para pembaca yang merupakan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris dan bukan beragama Islam untuk menterjemahkan istilah-istilah Islam dikaji. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa norma untuk menterjemahkan istilah-istilah Islam adalah selaras dengan pilihan pembaca sasaran untuk membaca jenis terjemahan yang tidak mengandungi sebarang unsur asing.

PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING OF RELIGIOUS CULTURAL TERMS FROM PERSIAN INTO ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

Persian literature has had a significant role in introducing Middle Eastern culture and art to the West. Studies undertaken on the translation of Persian literature have been mostly focused on the Persian classical poetry while modern Persian literature, especially non-fiction literature has been ignored. Translation of modern non-fiction Persian literature with Islamic content has grown drastically in the post-revolutionary period. Therefore, this study is based on three books in the field of non-fiction modern Persian literature titled *Lost in the Crowd*, *Hajj*, and *Shi'ite Islam*. The selected texts contain various Islamic terms common in Persian Middle Eastern religious context which bear highly culture-loaded meanings. This research has two phases. In the first phase, the study draws upon Toury's (2012) methodology of descriptive translation studies (DTS). The study attempts to identify various types of Islamic terms and then identifies the translation procedures and overall strategies used in their translation in order to uncover norms which govern the translation process in the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms from Persian into English. AlGhamdi's (2016) taxonomy for the recognition of types of Islamic terms and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) and Mansor's (2011) models were applied to show translation procedures. In addition, Venuti's (2000) two translation strategies were selected in order to reveal the overall translation strategy in this study. The result yielded 1160 cases of Islamic religious cultural terms in 13 categories and the use of 17 different procedures in the process of translating. This study

revealed that translation is based on ethnocentric norms dominant in the target context, that is to say, the results of the study in the first phase revealed that norms of translating Persian Islamic religious cultural terms into English is towards a domesticated translation. In the second phase of the study, the native English speakers who are non-Muslim readers' preferences for translating Islamic terms were investigated. The results have also showed that norm of translating Islamic terms is in line with the target readers' preference for reading a type of translation that removes traces of foreignness.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

For a long time, the field of Translation Studies (TS) was dominated by linguistics and hence, translation was assumed as merely a linguistic activity with faithfulness to the ST as a criterion for proving a good translation. Later, it was argued that “translation is not merely and not even primarily a linguistic process” (Nord, 2005, p. 10). With the advent of cultural approach to TS in 1990s, it was claimed that “translations are never produced in a vacuum” (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998, p. 14). It takes place in “situations that involve members of different cultures” (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 40) and more specifically, translation is assumed as “a fact of history and a product of target culture” (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990, p. 3). Since then, researches have been located in the wider context of culture and scholars and researchers started to grant more consideration to the role of target culture, target text, and target reader to produce an appropriate translation.

As a reaction to the prescriptive models, Polysystem theory was developed by Even-Zohar in 1970s. It shifts the focus of translation away from heated debate about faithfulness to the source text (ST) towards a study that sees “translated literature as a system operating in the larger social, literary and historical systems of the target culture” (Munday, 2016, p. 170). It provided a ground for the concept of norm to emerge in the 1990s as a broad concept that affects “the entire process of translation, including source-text selection” (Hermans, 1999, p. 76). Norms and regularities as extra-linguistic

constraints that govern the practice of any translational action, have been brought to the fore by scholars in the TS such as (Toury, 1995; Hermans, 1991; Chesterman, 1993; Baker, 1992) and its unstability was addressed by Schäffner (2010) because norms as sociocultural constraints are “specific to a culture, society and time” (Munday, 2008, p.113).

In target-oriented approach to TS, the centrality of target readers from various dimensions has been discussed by scholars such as (Nida, 2000; Newmark, 2003; Hermans, 1999; Venuti, 1998) and factors related to target readers’ ideological convictions (Ping, 2012), types of readers (Nord, 2005), their background knowledge (Venuti, 1998), and their language, identity, or social position (Venuti, 2002) have been addressed. These aspects affect readers’ preference and consequently, make translation more challenging for the translators.

This study aims to investigate, with regard to sociocultural norms, procedures and strategies used in the translation of Persian IRCTs into English in the non-fiction modern literature including *Lost in the Crowd*, *Hajj*, and *Shi’ite Islam* and to examine the target readers’ preference for the translation of these terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

Given the fact that meaning is culturally determined and culture can influence and constrain translation (Larson, 1984), beside untranslatability of texts, extralinguistic factors such as socio-cultural and socio-linguistic factors can cause translation problem arise and make the process of translating problematic. Hence, translation of culture-

bound terms is problematic as they are bound to the sociocultural reality beyond language. In solving the problem of translating culture-bound terms, translators need to find solutions that “serve current target-cultural norms and other aspects of the translation situation” (Leppihalme, 1997, p. 128). Moreover, categorization of culture-bound terms is another issue that differs in detail depending on the type of textual material investigated. In other words, the categorization in audiovisual materials such as movies, TV soap opera can differ from older classifications in text-based fiction or comic texts (ibid, p. 127). It implies that categorization of religious cultural terms in the case of contemporary non-fiction literature and in the Middle Eastern Muslim context needs to be investigated.

The English translations of modern Persian literature with religious content in the post-revolutionary years increased significantly (cf. section 2.2.2). Literature in this period centers on subjects related to Islam and Islamic values. Therefore, modern Persian literature written during the years before the revolution and translated after Islamic revolution, both fiction and non-fiction, contains copious number of terms with religiously loaded meaning. For this reason, three texts in the genre of non-fiction literature namely, *Lost in the Crowd*, *Hajj*, and *Shi'ite Islam* were chosen to investigate norms in the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms (IRCTs) with regard to the socio-cultural context of the target culture. To investigate norms of translating religious terms, Toury's (1995) descriptive translation studies (DTS) as a paradigm is applied. This study has two steps; in the first step norms in rendering Persian Islamic terms into English is examined and in the second step target readers' preference for the translation of Islamic terms is identified.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There is a link between language and culture; language reflects the differences between cultures and, hence, translation of language is translation of cultures (Nida 1964; Larson 1984). In the global context, due to difference between Western and Eastern cultures, texts written in the Eastern culture contain elements unclear for Western readers with insufficient knowledge of the Eastern context. Hence, translation of terms that bear culturally loaded meaning becomes problematic for translators. The role of culture as a determining factor in the translation has been mentioned by TS scholars (Hermans 1999; House 2009). The problem is more challenging when it comes to the translation of religious culture. According to Nida (1947),

The religious culture of any people contains by far the most complicated lexical problems. Religious systems usually differ far more widely than any other part of culture. There is a somewhat limited number of basic types of material and social adjustments which people can make. ... Religious phenomena are, moreover, much more difficult for the translator to analyze. Ideas are very intangible things. Whatever is tangible for a religious culture (religious system), may be intangible for another culture (p. 203).

Untranslatability of Islamic religious cultural terms can be viewed in the translation of both concrete items and abstract notions. For example, *ḥajr* is a religious artifact. It is a small rectangle of packed clay from Mecca or Karbala which is placed on the ground by Shia Muslims when they pray; the forehead touches this remembrance of sacred turf. It is an Islamic term that does not exist in the western context. Translation of culture becomes more difficult when it comes to abstract terms. For instance, the word

–mahram”, in Islamic discourse, refers to those relatives of a man or a woman that being married with them is illegal in the Islamic law. These terms have no equivalences in the western culture. Therefore, they reflect “voids resulting from extralinguistic factors” (Dagut, 1981, p. 64). Moreover, religious language deals with supernatural events or beings that make translation problematic as they do not address to any extralinguistic reality which is a prerequisite for solid comprehension (Ivir, 1991). For example, “jinn” refers to a supernatural creature in Islamic discourse. Although Muslims strongly believe in the presence of “jinn” in the world as it was addressed in the Holy Qur‘an, western readers whose demand for causality and whose assumption of the levels of reality are not identical with that of Eastern Muslim readers (Nasr, 1975), have no perception of existence of such a non-human creature. Hence, it shows that in the translation of Islamic terms, parts of Islamic cultures might not be transferred through language and referential gaps, consequently, might jeopardise a reasonable understanding.

The vital role of readers to tackle with the problem of untranslatability and in the decisions on the choice of appropriate translation strategies has been mentioned by some TS scholars and researchers. It is believed that “just as there could be no literature without writers and translators, there could be no literature without readers” (Nelson & Maher, 2013, p. 7). Texts are written to be read and are translated for a reader who belongs to a different language and culture. Readership as a main factor in the translation of cultural elements was indicated by Newmark (2003, p. 102). Moreover, in the translation of culture bound terms, it is assumed that communicative value of a text can be evaluated by target language recipients to judge to what extent the TT is

comprehended (Farghal & Al-Masri, 2000) and to evaluate to what extent the TT is in accordance with target readers' expectation (Evers, Dienstbach, Pinto, & Borba, 2010). Meanwhile, due to heterogeneity of target readers, translators must ~~be~~ be aware of TT readers' needs and to take into account the expectations and background knowledge of potential TT readers in order to make decisions on appropriate translation strategies" (Leppihalme, 1997, p. 20). In addition, it is assumed that there is a relationship between target norms and readers' preference (Ruokonen, 2011; Cronin, 2012). Readers' preference can reflect the target norms and, hence, the degree of closeness of TT to the socio-cultural norms of target context can be measured by recognizing to what extent it is in accordance with the target reader's preference in order to make an appropriate translation.

In recognition of the importance of identifying preference of non-Muslim English speaking readers for translating IRCTs, translators explained the use of certain translation procedures in the prefaces of the selected translations, noting that they attempted to make the translation of IRCTs more comprehensible to the western readers. Nevertheless, translation of non-fiction modern Persian literature has rarely received attention and target readers' preference in the translation of religious terms has not received attention among researchers. In the light of these facts, this study is an attempt to bring out translation norms and preference of English-speaking readers for English translations of IRCTs in *Lost in the Crowd*, *Hajj*, and *Shi'ite Islam* to see whether translation norm is in conformity with target readers' preference for the translation of IRCTs.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives and aims of this study are as follows:

1. To identify and classify Islamic religious cultural terms in selected Persian into English translations.
2. To discover the procedures and strategies used in the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms in selected Persian into English translations.
3. To investigate the readers' preference for the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms in selected Persian into English translations.

1.5 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer to the following questions:

1. What are the Islamic religious cultural terms and how are they classified in selected Persian into English translations?
2. What are the procedures and strategies used in the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms in selected translations from Persian into English?
3. What is the readers' preference for the translation of Islamic religious cultural terms in selected Persian into English translations?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The first contribution of the study is that non-fiction literature positioned on the periphery of a culture's literary polysystem, receives correspondingly less attention in

the TS researches. This study provides insight into the complexities of such texts in the translation from a minor language-Persian into a lingua-franca language-English. The special nature of these texts and their translation procedures and strategies in the sociocultural context of TL are drawn.

It is true that Islamic terms are mostly rooted in Arabic and the origins of many of Islamic terms in Persian are Arabic such as *-zakat*,” *ma‘ad*,” and *-ihram*”. Moreover, there are also Islamic terms rooted in Persian such as *-namaz* (prayer”), *-roozeh* (fasting), *-goldasteh* (minaret)”. Beside it, there are neutral terms rooted in Arabic but are used with a religious connotative meaning in Persian such as *-roozeh*” and *-roozehxan*”. The former word *-hawzah*” means garden in Arabic, while in Persian it means mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and the person who performs roozeh for people is called roozehxan (Nahvi 1989, p. 173). In addition, there are Islamic terms that are fully or partially rooted in Persian and spread the flavor of SL in a text. For example the word *-imam*” is originally an Arabic term but imamzadeh is a Persian term. The term is partially rooted in Arabic and in Persian. In another example, the corresponding term for *-rouzeh*” in Persian is *-fasting*” in English and *-siyam*” or *-sawm*” in Arabic. The equivalent term for fasting is different in Persian and in Arabic and the term is completely rooted in Persian. Since the study of translation of religious cultural terms (IRCTs) have a contribution to the development of TS researches, this study is a good source for presenting the semantic complexities and nuances in the juxtaposition of the Persian Islamic religious terms with their English counterparts; it makes evident the cultural and linguistic similarities and differences between two

language systems. Hence, the findings of this study contribute to the extension of knowledge about the translation of highly cultural terms between Persian and English with regard to the sociocultural norms of target culture.

The findings of this study uncover target readers' preference for the English translation of Persian IRCTs. Knowing the target readers' preferences for type of translating IRCTs can help translators improve the quality of TTs containing highly cultural terms in the future.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations are considered in the study. The first one is about the case study. Literature is a broad domain containing fiction and non-fiction literature; each one with various genres and sub-genres. The current study focuses particularly on non-fiction literature. The area of research is narrowed down to the examination of translation of works that deal with the Islamic ideology (cf. section, 2.2.2). Among non-fiction literature, this research is concerned only with the translation of three works namely, *Lost in the Crowd*, *Hajj*, and *Shi'ite Islam*.

The second limitation is about the language. Annually, plenty of books in the genre of non-fiction literature are translated from Persian into various languages either into western languages such as English, French, German, or eastern languages such as Urdu, Tamil, Mandarin, Malay. This study is concerned only with the translation from Persian into English rather than from other languages into Persian or vice versa.

The third limitation used in the study is about the elements under investigation. Since the realm of culture is so extended to deal with (cf. section, 2.5), in the study of the translation of culture, it is narrowed down to the investigation of merely religious and non-verbal cultural terms.

1.8 Key Concepts

1.8.1 Culture: It is a set of shared values and conventions that belongs to a community to guide peoples' thoughts and behavior. Tylor (1903) defines culture as ~~that~~ "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p. 1).

1.8.2 Cultureme: The concept refers to cultural features. According to Katan (2009b), culturemes are ~~for~~ "formalized, socially and juridically embedded phenomena that exist in a particular form or function in only one of the two cultures being compared" (p. 78).

1.8.3 Religious Cultural Terms (RCTs): They refer to ~~words~~ "words dealing with religious culture" which are intangible to people unfamiliar with a specific religious community and its belief system. Religious terms bear either concrete loads of meaning or abstract and are categorized in different taxonomies (Nida, 1947, p. 204).

1.8.4 Translation Norms: It denotes ~~the~~ "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community — as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate — into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioral dimension" (Toury, 1995; p. 63).

1.8.5 Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS): It is one of the two subdivisions of pure translation studies. Holmes divides Descriptive Translation Studies into three areas: function-oriented translation studies, process-oriented translation studies and product-oriented translation studies (Toury, 1995, p. 4). As a systematic paradigm of translation studies, this model was developed by Toury to identify general characteristics and laws of translation. According to Toury (1995), it is a target text-oriented discipline consisting of “carefully performed studies into well-defined corpuses, or sets of problems” (p. 1).

1.8.6 Domestication: It is a global translation strategy in which the translator is inclined to bring the ST closer to the target language and culture, resulting in changes in linguistic forms and cultural values. It denotes “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values, bringing the author back home”. In other words, the translator tries to replace strange SL forms and conflicting cultural values with target forms and values (Venuti, 2004, p. 15).

1.8.7 Foreignization: It is another translation strategy introduced by Venuti (2004). He defines it as “an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (p. 15). That is to say, by applying this strategy, the translator tries to preserve the unique linguistic forms and cultural values of the ST instead of replacing them with the target forms and values familiar to target readers. Similar to domestication strategy, there are degrees of foreignization.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters. The first chapter is a detailed introduction to the study and includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives and significance of the study. It also introduced the research questions and how the study is delimited for further studies. This chapter continued with defining the key terms that are necessary for a better understanding of the grounds based on which the study was designed and conducted and finally the corpus of the study was presented.

The second chapter consists of two sections. The first part provided a historical overview of trend of religion in Persian literature. The concept of culture and then, the importance of culture and language from translation perspective and religious terms as a problematic area in the translation were critically discussed. Then, the study of religious cultural elements was limited to the studies conducted on the translation of cultural elements in the context of Iran in order to present a detailed review of the pertinent research to provide the appropriate preview and justification for this study. The issues of untranslatability and importance of expectation of target readers in the translation were explained. The second part was devoted to the theoretical framework of the study. The descriptive translation studies as a paradigm of study, concept of norm, proposed taxonomies for identifying religious cultural terms and proposed translation models were presented in this chapter.

The third chapter described the methodology adopted for this study. It explained how this research was going to answer the research questions and from where it began. The corpus was introduced and the reason behind the selection of this corpus was given. The

procedures of the study for a qualitative analysis to extract translation norms were explained in details. Then, a quantitative analysis procedure for identifying target readers' preference was elaborated.

In the fourth chapter, the researcher identified and extracted type of IRCTs from the selected corpus. The researcher attempted to account for the practices and procedures used in the translation of IRCTs. This chapter answered the first and second research questions of this study. The fifth chapter was dedicated to the study of readerships and target readers' preference for the translation of IRCTs. In this chapter, respondents' answers to the questionnaire as a medium prepared for answering the third objective of the present study was examined.

Chapter six concluded the entire study. It began with the review of all the results, and subsequently the findings were discussed and interpreted, and also the overall translation tendencies for the translation of IRCTs were shown. The implication of the study was presented. The chapter additionally offered suggestions for further research by considering the limitations and delimitations of the present study and advantages of replication of the study in other text types and between other languages. The final chapter of the thesis ended with a list of the contributions of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Overview

This chapter was divided into several sections. In the first section of the chapter, Persian literature and trend of religion in the Persian literature historically were reviewed. In the second section, importance of translation in the target context, position of modern Persian literature and the selected texts as the corpus of the present study were analyzed. The next section was devoted to the concept of culture and its definition both in Persian and in English through the lens of anthropologists and cultural studies' scholars were presented. In the fourth section, the link between language, culture and translation were discussed and the implications of culture in translation were detailed. In the fifth and sixth sections, concept of cultureme, untranslatability of religious cultural terms and its underlying factors were explained. In the seventh section, target readers' role in the translation along with scholars' attitudes towards the role of readers in the TS were investigated. The last section was devoted to theoretical framework of this study. DTS and Norm theory were elaborated and proposed typology of religious cultural terms (RCTs), and proposed translation procedures and strategies for transferring such terms were highlighted.

2.2 Persian Literature

Persian literature has a long history. It dates back to the earliest surviving inscriptions made in pre-Islamic era, in the time of Achaemenid (522 BCE), the first Persian Empire.

The Old Persian literature is the surviving works which constitute pre-Islamic Persian literature. With the advancement of Islam in Iran, Persian literature entered a new phase. Yarshater (2015) divides Persian literature into two phases of Islamic civilization. He believes that the first phase of Islamic civilization started when the Arabs had their dominance over Persian language, culture, and literature and lasted some six centuries. The second phase, from the eleventh through the eighteenth centuries, constitutes a second phase of Islamic culture. During this time, “the cultural leadership of the Islamic world passed on to the Persians” (p. 207).

Poetry was the most popular form of creating literary works. Although the quatrain (*robā‘i*), the *masnavi*, the *ghazal*, and the *qasideh* were forms of poetry in the pre-Islamic period in the Persian literature, Persian classical poetry flourished by adapting the meter and rhyme scheme of the Arabic poetic tradition. Appearance of new literary styles in the Persian literature started from the emergence of the epic panegyric Khorasani style of poetry around the tenth century CE until the second half of the twelfth. The Iraqi style of poetry, a lyrical style that uses mystical Sufi concepts appeared later in the thirteenth century CE and was popular until fifteenth century CE. The Indian style which emerged in the fifteenth century CE is partly a neo-classical literary movement advocating a return to earlier aesthetic norms known as *bāzgašt-e adabi*. It was known from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries). Modern Persian literature appeared later with its close affinities with literary developments in the West (Huyse, 2012).

As for narrative literature in pre-Islamic period, ancient Iranian myths and legends formed the content of ancient books such as the Avestan books, the *Yašts* in particular

form the narrative material used by classical Persian writers of fiction in the medieval time. *Vis o Rāmin*, as a medieval Persian fiction, the Parthian romance had a great impact on later Persian literature. In Islamic period, narrative literature appeared in the form of prose writings, biographies, hagiographies, and historical works. In modern period, Persian literature experienced dramatic changes and consequently, entered a new era. Contemporary Persian literature has been, in fact, inspired by developments and changes that had occurred in Western literatures. They adapted aspects of Western literature and then, Persianized the literary work (ibid.).

2.2.1 Religious Trend in the Persian Literature

Religion and literature are undoubtedly cultural notions. Literature is a means by which religious scholars and mystics promote their thoughts. Religious themes (Islamic, Christian, and Zoroastrian) can be traced in Persian verse and prose literature throughout history. Texts of religious nature in pre-Islamic era include *Zarātošt-nāma* related to the life of the prophet of the Zoroastrians. Manichean manuscripts written by Mani, the first religious teacher in Persia, deal with religious matters. Important corpus of writings in Book Pahlavi script is mostly of religious content. *Arda Wiraz –namag* (Book of the Righteous Wiraz), a popular prose work relating to heaven and hell by the righteous Wiraz is an example of texts of religious content dates back to pre-Islamic era (Huyse, 2012).

Religious flow in Persian literature after Islam appeared for different reasons. Hence, this trend was separated in three different periods. The first period began with the aim of reviving the Persian culture with the Islamic branch (Yarshater, 2015). Religious themes

in this period in Persian literature can be traced in Persian poetry. Rudaki, a poet of 10th century, is the first Iranian poet in the Islamic era influenced by the Qur'an, hadith and religious culture. The continuous presence of religious thoughts in the literature of the fifth to the ninth century can be found in prose writings as well. Some works known as non-belleristic writings such as Tabari's Qur'anic commentary known as *Tafsir al-Tabari* and his historical chronicle *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of the Prophets and Kings) in 9th century are examples of works devoted to Islamic religion in this period.

Literature would be drastically influenced by schools of thought. Sufism since 10th century played a major role in the process of Islamization of the Iranian cultural sphere and in particular, prepared the ground for the spread of Shi'ism (Nasr, 1974, p. 272). This movement eventually led to the emergence of mystical Sufi literature. The literary expression of its doctrine suited its didactic approach led to the creation of monumental works in Persian literature. A remarkable spread of Sufi doctrine was reflected in well-known Persian works such as Ġa-zāli's *Kimiyā-ye sa'ādat* (Alchemy of Happiness) in 12th century, Sanā'i's *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqah* (The Garden of Truth) in 12th century, Neẓāmi's *Makhzan al-Asrar* (The Treasury of Mysteries) in 12th century, and Sa'di's *Golestān* (The Rose Garden) in 13th century, and Rumi's *Mathnawi-e ma'nawi* (Spiritual Couplets) in 13th century. Two mystical allegories; *Taḍkerat al-awlīā'* (Biographies of the Saints) written by Attar in the 12th century and *Nafahāt al-uns* (Breaths of intimacy) composed by Jāmī in 15th century are examples of Persian hagiographical accounts in Islamic period (Fouchecour, 2012).

The second phase of appearance of religious texts, with political reasons, was during Safavid period (16th - 18th centuries). Nasr (1974) notes that “the Safavid period marks a definite turning point in the history of Persia and the beginning of a new phase in the history of Islam in that country” (p. 274). For the purpose of national individualism, the Shi'a religion was founded during this period. Literature during Safavid period was directly related to religion and heavily relies on it. The religious material dealing with the lives and martyrdom of the members of the Prophet's family and the other Imams of the Shi'ites formed the content of writings in Persian literature. The use of literature as a medium to promote Shi'ism led to the formation and proliferation of religious poetry and religious narrative in the Safavid era.

The qaṣīde in praise of the Prophet and the Imams, as well as a rich strophic poetry of a popular religious type, often recited in the form of ~~marthiya~~ or elegy on the death of Shi'ite Imam” in Shi'ite ceremonials were popular during Safavid period (Browne, 1959, p. 172). Two works of this kind are *Tufanul-Buka* (Deluge of Weeping) and *Asrarush-Shahadat* (Mysteries of Martyrdom) (ibid, p. 180-182). The epic narrative was transmuted into a hagiography of a Shi'ite imam both in verse and prose, of a more popular kind known as Rowdha Khani (Rowdha-readings) in recitations of the death of a Shi'ite Imam (ibid, p. 172). One of the earlier and best-known books of this kind is *Rowdhat al-šohadā'* (the Garden of Martyrs) in 15th century a narrative account of the death of the Prophet of Islam and his close descendants. Many non-belleristic writings including commentaries on the Qur'an, collections of canonical and apocryphal hadith, books dealing with the lives of the prophets, Sufi hagiographies, and tazkere form Persian literature in this period.

Finally, the third period of religious flow in Persian literature started in 1960s, few decades before Islamic revolution, was directed towards modern Islamization and revival of religion in society through the production of texts with Islamic content. Nativism in the work of revolutionary story writers and Muslim storytellers is characterized by a strong emphasis on Islamic and revolutionary components (Edrisi & Balali, 2015). The literary texts produced during pre-Islamic revolution period have been formed around the opposition to promoting the manifestations of Western culture. In the same line, Karimi-Hakkak (1997) argues that “the path to an egalitarian future was sure to lie through a return to religious values most associated with Iranianness” (p. 195). The resistance discourse in the cultural arena in opposition to modern beliefs, values and beliefs in literature produced before Islamic revolution is evident in literary works such as Al-Ahmad’s *The School Principal* (1958), Sadeqi’s *The Trench and the Empty Canteens* (1970), and Sa’edi’s *Vahemeha-ye bi Nam va Neshan* (1967). Such works articulated an internal connection between social change and a lamentable loss of traditional norms and values.

As for religious trend in the literary writings in this period, Karimi-Hakkak asserts that in 1960s “the idea of religion as a rallying point around which social energies could be mobilized began to permeate literary works” (1991, p. 512). For example, Al-e Ahmad in *Lost in the Crowd* (1964) points to renewed attention to religion as a mobilizing force capable of ending the nightmare of a disintegrating society (ibid, p. 511). Non-belleristic writings of Jalal Al-Ahmad, Ali Shari’ati, Ruhollah Khomeini, Morteza Motahari, and Mahmud Talqani as the originators of a nativist and revivalist movement in Iran constituted the discourse of the 1960s as the genesis of an authentic

religious revolution in Iran (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2015, p. 229). These influential figures as writers and intellectuals before the revolution began to produce works in the form of essay writings for religious political enlightenment. Al-e Ahmad's *Plagued by the West* (1964), Shariati's *Hubut in Kavir* (1980) and *Yes, brother! That's the way it was* (1980), Motahhari's *Anecdotes of Pious Men* (1960) and *The Human Being And His Destiny* (1966) are examples of books for enlightenment with religious content in this period.

2.2.2 Religious Trend in the Persian Literature after the Islamic Revolution

It is believed that discourse of the Islamic Revolution of Iran has been a religious-political discourse in which Islamic culture has played a major role in its victory. Hence, with the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution among writers and audiences of Persian literature, a great deal of enthusiasm for religious literature emerged and strengthened. In the fiction literature in this period affected by the revolution, a new approach emerged that attempted to record the religious values as human virtues on its agenda. The writers of the religious trend seek to answer the problems of their society with a religious-centered view. In other words, contemporary literature was formed after the Islamic Revolution, with the emphasis on the replacement of committed literature (*Adabiyat-va Honar-e Mote'ahhed*) in place of non-religious literature and its expansion in order to revive Persian culture with Islamic spheres and "became representative of an emerging revolutionary literary trend in the post-revolutionary period" (Shams, 2015, p. 169).

The religious trend in the literature after revolution has changed to some extent. In the first decade after Islamic revolution, religious novels often narrate the events of the imposed war and the Islamic Revolution, and the novels have a religious color. The

themes and stories of this period, especially those stuck directly or indirectly with the two categories of war and revolution, are sustainability, sacrifice, and martyrdom. Ashura and its characters and events are featured in these stories as examples of heroic qualities. The emphasis on Islamic revolution and war is the most obvious theme of the novels in the first period. In the second decade after the Islamic Revolution, a religious novel aims at a variety of topics and tries to provide its insights in more diverse formats. Varieties of techniques are applied for writing a fiction. Religion in this period is mainly considered as a collective and as a kind of social and political ritual. The writers of the spectacular flow in the third decade have increasingly drawn attention to the nature of the story and the rules of the form and genre, and have worked to create an impact on the value of art as well (Saberpour & Shadloo, 2017).

Persian literature after Islamic revolution has become a political tool for promoting the Islamic state ideology. Therefore, religious literary and artistic works (*Adabiyat-va Honar-e Dini*) has benefited from state sponsorship in terms of both production and translation (Shams, 2015) (cf. Appendix C). Translation of Persian literature with Islamic content known as committed literature has proliferated since the advent of Islamic revolution. Dehqan's *Journey to Heading 270 Degrees* (1994) and Sarshar's *That Which That Orphan Saw* (1998), Ahmadzadeh's *A City Under Siege: Tales of the Iran–Iraq War* (2000) and Hosseini's *One Woman's War: Da (Mother)* (2008) are examples of novels with religious content published and translated into English in the post-Islamic revolution period.

2.2.3 Modern Persian Literature in the Socio-Cultural Context of the US

The innovations that took place in Persian literature after the Second World War facilitated the emergence of modern Persian literature and consequently, western readers' access to it (Beard, 1998). Since then, modern Persian literature has been translated into different languages but the major portion of Persian translations in the world has been published by the US. This is not surprising because the US holds the biggest publishing industry in the world. While American publishers own 80% of the market for translation of modern Persian literature, the rates for English and Canadian publishers are 10% and 2% respectively (Nanquette, 2016). Though this country is still leading in producing Persian translations, published Persian translations by the US are few in number.

Translation of modern Persian literary works in the US over three decades, between 1979 and 2011, shows that it has not received much attention in the world literary history. According to UNESCO's Index Translationum database, over three decades, only 350 Persian books have been translated which are mainly related to classical literature or religion (Nanquette, 2016). It indicates that modern Persian literature in the socio-cultural context of the US is not much welcomed. There are some reasons for its smaller field of circulation and lack of visibility at international level in comparison to Iranian movies that have succeeded to win a higher rank in the international movie production (Kenevisi, 2017).

Translation is mostly aligned with the cultural policies of the superpower countries and it has been used to keep a balance of power. In other words, translation is motivated

by superpowers' political reaction to the events in the world. In the case of Persian literature, Kamran argues that translation policy in the US aims to promote the discussions of cultural discourse on Iran on the issues of Islamophobia and orientalism (Motlagh & Nanquette, 2016).

Both individuals and institutions have had an influential role in facilitating Persian literature translation into English in the US. Institutions play a key role in promoting and providing financial support for translations (Lefever, 1992). In spite of it, patronage for promoting a culture overseas influences which texts to be chosen for translations or how many books to be translated. Haddadian asserts that the policies of the Iranian government and superpowers for translation have made the market of modern Persian literature much smaller. The fact is that translation is closely associated with geopolitical issues and it is not neutral. Translation is a political act influencing which texts need to be chosen, produced, and even distributed. The diplomatic relationship with the US has encouraged Iranian government mainly to finance the translations of religious books or texts conveying the Islamic message rather than supporting the publication of literary Persian works (cf. Appendix C). Until 2012, no institution was sponsoring the Persian language. In 2012, Sa'di institution was established and started promoting Persian literature. So far, this institute has played a key role in promoting translation exchange (Motlagh & Nanquette, 2016).

In the context of the US, small individual projects have compensated for the lack of patronage for modern Persian literature. Approximately, 76% of translations have been carried out by at least one Iranian-American translator. Though some scholars teaching

at the American universities have succeeded to publish their translations through university presses, the number of published copies has been very limited and books are mainly published by small companies which lack professional publishing standards (Nanquette, 2016).

Individual Iranian-American translators have been influential in the promotion of Persian literature in the US. They are less restricted by the institutional policies; therefore, they often follow their own preferences which are against the US publishing policies. Nanquette (2016) argues that the way in which Persian books are translated do not reflect orientalist features of Iranians and their culture and religion which is in contrast with what American readers expect to see in the translations. In addition, modern Persian literature is often translated by scholars who insist on the accuracy of translation and prefer to adopt foreignization strategy which often interrupts the reading flow. Translators often emphasize the Iranianness in translations to verify an identity endangered by the politics of the Iranian government, and by emigration. Both emphasizing Iranian identity and keeping traces of Iranianness in the translation and tendencies for intellectual texts than popular literature became the main reasons that American readers uninterested in Iranian indigenous literature prefer to read translations of modern Western literary fiction instead.

2.2.4 *Lost in the Crowd, Hajj, and Shi'ite Islam in the US Context*

Lost in the Crowd (1985), *Hajj* (1979), and *Shi'ite Islam* (1975) were written by three Iranian prominent intellectual figures in Islamic discourse, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969), Ali Shariati (1933-1977), and Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabaei (1903-